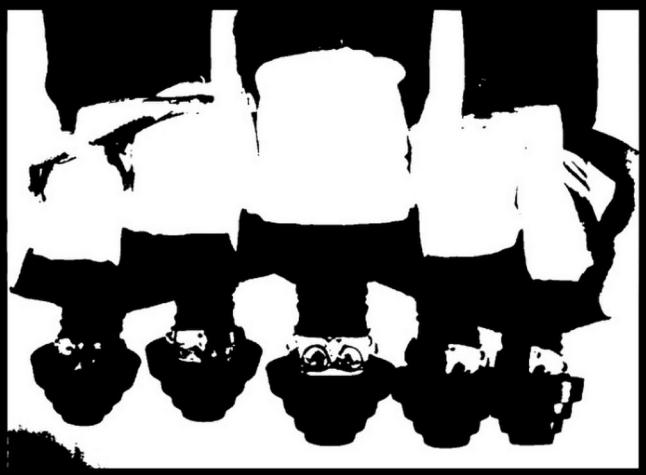
SUM BUNNY

AQUARIUS OR DEVO?



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AQUARIUS OR DEVO?

Popular Music and the Power to Name an Age

By Sum Bunny

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In 1969, a calendar became a chorus.

“Aquarius/Let the Sunshine In,” recorded by the Fifth Dimension, spent six weeks at the top of the American singles chart. Its prophecy was irresistible: a new age was arriving, antagonism would give way to understanding, and love would assume command of history. The future no longer appeared to depend entirely upon legislatures, armies, corporations, or frightened human beings. It had been written into the sky.

Beneath the argument over historical ages lies a simpler and more difficult question: are human beings becoming more compassionate, or merely more capable of describing themselves as advanced?

A year later, National Guardsmen opened fire at Kent State University. Four students were killed and nine wounded. Gerald Casale, who knew Allison Krause and Jeffrey Miller, later described the shootings as a decisive confirmation of “de-evolution”: the suspicion that technological sophistication and moral development were not advancing together. That idea helped shape DEVO, whose mechanical rhythms and deliberately awkward performances would turn progress into a grotesque joke.

Aquarius and DEVO seem to offer opposite answers. Aquarius says yes: humanity is awakening into love. DEVO says not necessarily: technical sophistication can coexist with conformity, cruelty, and organized brutality. One turns recurrence in the heavens into a promise of moral transformation. The other looks at modern institutions and finds regression concealed beneath technological progress.

Their opposition reveals how historical direction is made. Editing selects and sequences events. Framing tells us what the sequence means. Amplification carries that meaning through institutions until it can organize expectation and conduct. These operations overlap, but they are not identical. A tape splice is not a constellation boundary, and neither is a history book. The literal edit at the center of “Aquarius/Let the Sunshine In” supplies a model: facts constrain the arrangement without arranging themselves.

The equinoctial point shifts against the stellar background whether or not anyone assigns that motion a civilizational meaning. The students at Kent State were killed whether or not their deaths fit a theory of history. But neither celestial motion nor human suffering automatically tells us what kind of time we inhabit. Compassion is not self-announcing: a society can widen its circle of concern while hiding the people who bear the costs of its progress. Historical direction appears through selection, sequence, interpretation, and the power to make one interpretation audible.

The question returns whenever a society names its own present. “The Age of AI,” like the Age of Aquarius, can make a contingent project sound like a stage of cosmic development. Before accepting any age as destiny, we should ask who made its clock, who framed its direction, who possesses the means to make the frame travel, and whose suffering the frame teaches us to notice or ignore.

The heavens provide motion. Humans provide the chapter headings.

The Cut Sky

The astronomical foundation of the Aquarian story is real. Earth's axis slowly changes orientation, tracing a great circle against the stars. At the present rate, one full cycle of axial precession takes approximately 25,772 years, although the rate varies over long periods.

Astrologers commonly divide that cycle among twelve zodiacal signs. Dividing 25,772 by twelve produces periods of roughly 2,148 years. Under one familiar scheme, the Age of Pisces began near the start of the Common Era and the Age of Aquarius should begin sometime around the twenty-second century.

That schedule is clean because the astrological zodiac is clean. Its twelve equal signs each occupy thirty degrees of ecliptic longitude. Modern astronomical constellations are different: standardized regions of the celestial coordinate system whose stars may be separated by enormous distances. The International Astronomical Union adopted official boundaries in 1928, later published by Eugène Delporte in 1930, so that every point in the sky could be assigned unambiguously to one constellation.

Those regions are unequal. If the equinoctial point is tracked through them along the ecliptic, the resulting "ages" are unequal as well. One boundary-based calculation places the crossing from Pisces into Aquarius around 2597; strict reliance on the IAU regions also introduces Ophiuchus, an ecliptic constellation omitted from the conventional twelve-sign zodiac.[1]

Astronomy nevertheless recognizes no official Age of Pisces or Age of Aquarius. IAU boundaries were designed to standardize coordinates, not to divide civilization into eras. A date near 2600 is therefore not an astronomical prediction about society. It is the result of imposing a modern astrological question on modern astronomical boundaries.

This does not make the equal-sign zodiac defective. Astrology's signs form a symbolic geometry; astronomy's constellation regions form a coordinate standard. The error begins when the symbolic signs are presented as though their meanings and historical schedule were certified by physical constellations. A ruler is not defective because its inches are equal while the objects it measures are not. But the ruler cannot claim that nature arrived pre-divided into inches.

The famous conditions announced in *Hair* supply atmosphere rather than a unique celestial appointment. The Moon's presence in a seventh house recurs because astrological houses depend on a chart's time, location, and chosen system. Mars and Jupiter form conjunctions at intervals of about 2.2 years. "Aligns" specifies no exact angular relationship.[2] Astrology was genuinely embedded in the

cultural world surrounding *Hair*, but the lyric sounds technical without identifying an epoch. It is ritual language, not an ephemeris.[3]

A Modern Ancient Age

The familiar Age of Aquarius is often described as ancient wisdom recovered for the modern world. Its ingredients are ancient. Its familiar form is not.

Hipparchus is generally credited with recognizing precession in the second century BCE, and many ancient and medieval societies connected celestial cycles with earthly events. Yet historian of astrology Nicholas Campion reports that no known surviving classical or medieval astrological text uses precession to construct the familiar succession of civilizational zodiacal ages.

The modern doctrine emerged largely through eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European attempts to reorganize religious history. Comparative religion, solar mythology, occult revivalism, new chronologies of ancient civilization, and the prestige of modern astronomy converged. A. J. Pearce referred to precessional ages in 1879 without yet announcing an Age of Aquarius; Gerald Massey incorporated precession into speculative religious history; and later occult networks developed the characteristics that Aquarius would acquire in twentieth-century culture.[4]

Its modern origin does not make the doctrine fraudulent. Traditions develop historically. It does mean that the doctrine's authority cannot rest on an unbroken inheritance from antiquity.

Precession gave millenarian expectation something it had previously lacked: a cosmic clock that appeared measurable. The result was hope made scheduled. Harmony no longer had to appear merely as revelation, desire, or political project. It could be presented as the next position on a dial.

The schedule was also resilient. If transformation failed to arrive in 1900, perhaps the calculation was wrong. If it did not arrive in 1969, perhaps humanity was approaching the cusp. If it did not arrive in 2000, perhaps the transition required centuries. The prediction could retreat along the precessional cycle without surrendering the cycle itself.

The precision was partly borrowed. Astronomy supplied recurrence. Astrology supplied historical meaning.

The next cut is material rather than celestial: not a boundary drawn across coordinates, but magnetic tape divided and rejoined. Yet the question is the same: how does a measured interval become a story of direction?

Hair Already Knew Better

The anthem extracted from *Hair* is sunnier than the musical that contains it.

The show opens with "Aquarius," but its characters do not proceed steadily toward illumination. They encounter sexual freedom, racial conflict, drugs, generational rebellion, state authority, and the military draft. Claude cannot reconcile his identification with the counterculture and the society demanding his obedience.

In the original stage ending, Claude appears in military uniform as a figure the others cannot fully reach. By the finale he is left apparently dead, a casualty of the war from which the tribe's exuberance could not protect him.[3]

The tragic answer to "Aquarius" was therefore already present inside *Hair*. Cosmic expectation and political violence occupied the same stage. The tribe's feeling for Claude could not protect him from the institutions claiming his body. "Let the Sunshine In" did not follow a completed victory. It arose around a loss.

The Fifth Dimension's recording intensified this contradiction through a literal edit. "Aquarius" and "Let the Sunshine In" are not one continuous song in the musical. The first announces the coming age near the opening; the second belongs to the conclusion. The hit record carries the listener directly from prophecy to affirmation while omitting most of the drama between them, including Claude's inability to escape the war.

What sounded like a seamless historical ascent was made by cutting apart a tragedy.

The Cut Song

The edit was the work of identifiable artists and technicians. Members of the Fifth Dimension encountered *Hair* and pressed to record "Aquarius." Producer Bones Howe initially resisted because he did not think it functioned as a complete single. After seeing the musical, he conceived the solution: join it to "Let the Sunshine In."

The Fifth Dimension consisted of Billy Davis Jr., Marilyn McCoo, Florence LaRue, LaMonte McLemore, and Ron Townson. The finished record would depend on all five singers, Howe's production, Bob Alcivar's vocal arrangement, Bill Holman's instrumental arrangement, and the work of studio musicians and engineers.

The two pieces differed in key, tempo, mood, and dramatic purpose. Howe later compared the challenge to joining "two trains." Bob Alcivar arranged the vocals and helped build the transition; Bill

Holman arranged the strings and brass. Hal Blaine, Joe Osborn, Larry Knechtel, and other studio musicians supplied the instrumental foundation. The backing track was recorded at Wally Heider's Studio 3 in Hollywood. The group recorded its vocals separately in Las Vegas, working around its performance schedule; Billy Davis Jr.'s climactic lead grew partly through improvisation.[5]

The record therefore joined more than two compositions. It joined dramatic moments that had been separated across the musical, instrumental and vocal performances recorded in different cities, and individual acts of labor heard as a single communal present. Montage did not falsify those performances. It gave their separation a new direction.

Professional judgment, rehearsal, engineering, studio access, and capital made the apparent spontaneity possible. Yet artifice and feeling are not opposites. The construction created a new emotional path. The first section announces and describes; the second repeats and recruits. A proposition about the future becomes something bodies can perform together. The listener is no longer merely told that an age is coming. The listener is offered a role in sounding as though it has arrived.

The Fifth Dimension's agency is central. Five Black performers were not passive processors of a white counterculture's material. Their position exposed the racial instability of the industry's categories. Marilyn McCoo later recalled that some pop programmers assumed the group was white and became less receptive when they discovered otherwise, while some rhythm-and-blues outlets treated its sound as insufficiently Black. The group's performance at the 1969 Harlem Cultural Festival further complicates any story of simple commercial dilution. McCoo and Davis remembered the importance of acceptance by the Black audience there.[6]

"Aquarius/Let the Sunshine In" could operate simultaneously as crossover pop, Black professional achievement, communal affirmation, commercial product, and countercultural anthem. These meanings did not cancel one another.

The record led the *Billboard* Hot 100 for six weeks and won two Grammys in 1970. That establishes extraordinary exposure, not universal belief. Sales cannot tell us that millions accepted Aquarian doctrine. They show that millions were offered a repeatable language for imagining a shared future. The chart then aggregated sales and airplay reports into a public hierarchy: the record was not only heard but declared to be what the nation was hearing.[7]

Its reach depended on material conditions: a large postwar youth market, expanding universities, portable radios, television exposure, sophisticated studios, national distribution, and businesses eager to sell generational identity. It also emerged during the Vietnam War and the draft, when "youth" was both a marketing category and a population exposed to state violence.[8]

Kent State and the Counter-Edit

On April 30, 1970, President Richard Nixon announced a U.S. ground incursion into Cambodia, publicly widening the war. Protests followed at Kent State University, where tensions also involved the draft, damaged property, the burning of the ROTC building, the arrival of the Ohio National Guard, and the Guard's armed presence on campus.

On May 4, twenty-eight Guardsmen fired between sixty-one and sixty-seven shots over approximately thirteen seconds. Allison Krause, nineteen; Jeffrey Miller, twenty; Sandra Lee Scheuer, twenty; and William Knox Schroeder, nineteen, were killed. Krause and Miller had participated in the protest. Scheuer was walking through the area; Schroeder was observing from the parking lot. Nine other students were wounded.[9]

Questions remain about the precise sequence immediately preceding the gunfire and the intentions of individual Guardsmen. Objects had been thrown, and some protesters had engaged in confrontation. None of that makes the deaths inevitable or turns the people killed into narrative devices.

The killings helped trigger a nationwide student strike that closed or disrupted hundreds of campuses. Kent State was both a local event involving particular people and a national revelation about the relationship between the state and dissent.

Casale knew Krause and Miller and was present during the shootings. Mark Mothersbaugh was also on campus. Casale later described the experience as transforming de-evolution from an artistic joke into a conviction: polished institutions could revert instantly to organized brutality.

DEVO did not materialize fully formed that afternoon. Its origins include earlier collaborations and speculations by Casale, Bob Lewis, Mothersbaugh, and others. Its first documented public performance under the DEVO name occurred at Kent State's Creative Arts Festival in 1973. Kent State was less a solitary origin than the event that gave an emerging satire the force of a manifesto.[10]

De-evolution was not a scientific theory of reverse biological evolution. It was an aesthetic and political diagnosis. Consumer conformity, militarism, corporate entertainment, technological mediation, and social discipline had produced people who imagined themselves advanced while behaving mechanically. DEVO's stiff movements, synthetic sounds, matching costumes, and deliberately degraded cultural materials performed that contradiction.

Where "Aquarius" allowed the listener to join a swelling communal future, DEVO made synchronization look compulsory and absurd.

Nothing Pure Fell

Popular history often places 1969 and 1970 on opposite sides of a moral rupture. First came Woodstock, the Moon landing, *Hair*, and Aquarius. Then came Altamont, the expansion of the war, Kent State, and disillusionment.

The sequence is emotionally persuasive and historically deceptive. American forces were already fighting in Vietnam when the Fifth Dimension recorded its anthem. Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy had been assassinated in 1968. Police violence, racial rebellion, imperial warfare, political repression, and conflict within the counterculture did not wait for the decade to end. The year of Woodstock also brought public exposure of the My Lai massacre and the murders carried out by the Manson group. The Moon landing displayed astonishing technical coordination while the war displayed the uses to which coordination could be put.

Nothing pure fell. Compassion did not dawn in 1969 and die in 1970.

The period contained hope and disillusionment, but they were not sequential civilizations. They were simultaneous experiences distributed unequally. For many white, middle-class participants positioned to experience 1969 as a promise, disillusionment was genuine and sudden. The distortion begins when that loss of innocence becomes the world's historical transition.

For a student vulnerable to the draft, a Black family confronting discriminatory housing or policing, a Vietnamese civilian, or a woman navigating the distance between proclaimed sexual freedom and actual control over pregnancy or domestic labor, the radiant narrative already contained the darkness supposedly introduced in 1970.

The counterculture was not merely deluded. Antiwar organizing, feminist movements, Black freedom struggles, gay liberation, environmentalism, experimental communities, and transformations in art and education represented real labor. Failure to deliver final emancipation does not make that labor theatrical.

Optimism can erase suffering. Cynicism can erase labor.

A story of innocence followed by a fall protects the idea that innocence once existed. It turns structural violence into a sudden interruption of an otherwise harmonious age.

Edits Must Travel

The edit became powerful because it could travel.

From within the Aquarian worldview, the Fifth Dimension's record could express a genuine intuition that consciousness was changing. Its social reach also depended on microphones, magnetic tape, arrangers, session players, label financing, manufacturing, radio programmers, retailers, copyright law, and market segmentation. Infrastructure cannot explain why this arrangement moved people while countless others did not. Meaning cannot explain how a private intuition became a national soundtrack.

De-evolution traveled through infrastructure too. DEVO moved from self-released records, short films, and confrontational performances into famous advocacy, major labels, international distribution, radio, touring, and music television. David Bowie's endorsement and Brian Eno's production supplied legitimacy. Warner Bros. released the debut in the United States; Virgin released it in Britain. Regional radio airplay helped turn "Whip It" into a national hit, Warner financed its video, and MTV later gave DEVO's visual grammar mass circulation.[11]

Corporate distribution did not invalidate the critique. It altered what became legible at scale. A diagnosis of institutional regression could be consumed as a novelty single, an energy-dome costume, or an amusingly robotic performance. The same machinery that carried the counter-edit could turn de-evolution into a marketable image.

The social power to name an age is therefore distributed unequally. Many people experience history, but comparatively few control recording studios, publishing houses, universities, television networks, museums, archives, or algorithmic platforms. A period can feel universal because the institutions reproducing its description are extensive, not because everyone inhabits it in the same way.

The comparison is intentionally asymmetrical. Aquarius names a diffuse millenarian formation carried through spiritual movements, theater, publishing, popular music, and commerce. DEVO names a bounded artistic counter-edit. It never became a competing civilizational calendar. Its value here is diagnostic: it cuts the same American modernity differently and exposes what the larger chronology excludes.

The difference is therefore not manufactured Aquarius versus authentic DEVO. It is between differently manufactured accounts of modernity operating at radically different scales.

Aquarius said that greater consciousness was emerging beneath the disorder. DEVO said that greater disorder was emerging beneath the appearance of progress. Both converted contradiction into direction, but they are not evidentially equivalent. Aquarian chronology can retreat when predictions fail. DEVO begins with documented institutional violence, although it too misleads when a diagnosis of particular systems expands into a law of humanity.

The Event the Edit Almost Missed

An argument about historical selection must turn its method on itself. By moving from Kent State to DEVO, this essay has allowed the event most useful to its musical genealogy to stand for the nation's violence against students.

Eleven days after Kent State, in the first minutes of May 15, law-enforcement officers opened fire outside Alexander Hall at Jackson State College, a historically Black institution in Mississippi. Phillip Lafayette Gibbs, a junior and father of two, and James Earl Green, a seventeen-year-old high-school student walking home from work, were killed. Twelve people were shot and survived; others were injured by exploding glass and masonry. No officer was charged.

Jackson State cannot be reduced to "another Kent State." Historian Nancy K. Bristow locates the assault within Mississippi's longer regime of white supremacy, police violence, and racialized "law and order." Yet the public afterlives of the events must be compared. Kent State became a durable national emblem; Jackson State was pushed toward the margins. Race, institutional status, media circulation, and later commemoration helped determine which deaths represented the period.

The pattern had a predecessor. In February 1968, South Carolina Highway Patrol officers fired on Black student protesters at South Carolina State College in Orangeburg, killing Samuel Hammond Jr., Delano Middleton, and Henry Smith and wounding twenty-eight. Orangeburg, too, was excluded from the familiar national sequence of the sixties.

Kent State remains central here because it directly enters DEVO's genealogy, not because it best represents state violence against students. Jackson State and Orangeburg expose the unequal infrastructure of remembrance—and the unequal compassion that infrastructure permits. The essay's own route nearly reproduced the hierarchy it claims to analyze. The correction therefore belongs inside the argument, not in a footnote of contrition.[12]

What an Age Can Do

The Western zodiac is only one system through which societies have made time meaningful. The Chinese sexagenary cycle organizes recurring units of sixty.[13] Traditional Hindu cosmologies contain immense nested cycles, while Sri Yukteswar proposed a distinctive modern 24,000-year yuga chronology.[14] Persian and Islamic astrologers interpreted conjunction cycles as indicators of dynastic and religious change; Hesiod's sequence moved from gold through silver and bronze, was interrupted by a heroic age, and ended in iron.[15] These systems differ in structure, purpose, and ontology. Their

disagreement reveals that the meaning of a recurrence does not reside visibly inside it. Meaning arises from a tradition of interpretation.

Claims about historical ages become clearer when three powers are separated.

Predictive power asks whether a system can identify a transition in advance using stable criteria and specify what would count as success or failure. Aquarian chronology performs poorly here because its dates and meanings vary and disappointment can be displaced onto the cusp.

Interpretive power asks whether the system illuminates recurring desires, anxieties, or conflicts. Aquarius can be fruitful in this sense. Its symbolism gathers recognizable modern aspirations: knowledge shared across networks, resistance to hierarchy, collective consciousness, and the hope that communication might overcome domination.

Socially operative power asks whether an idea enters discourse and institutions strongly enough to shape expectation or action. An astrological age can become historically influential without being astronomically causal. It can give artists, activists, consumers, and communities a language for imagining themselves together.

These powers should not be confused. A story may coordinate action without predicting events. It may interpret experience without explaining causes. It may fail as astronomy while succeeding as myth. Social operation requires carriers, repetition, legitimacy, and resources. Histories and shared imaginaries do not merely name time; they organize expectations within it.[16]

What Moral Direction Would Require

The question announced at the beginning now returns in a form neither Aquarius nor DEVO can settle: are human beings becoming more compassionate?

There is no species-wide moral meter. Humanity does not act as a single subject, and biological evolution has no ethical destination. Moral progress, if the term is to mean anything, must describe specific changes in institutions, conduct, capacities, and distributions of power.

It must also begin with an openly normative commitment. Reducing preventable suffering and domination, expanding meaningful agency and the ability to refuse coercion, and maintaining practices of care and reciprocity count here as improvements. These standards are ethical judgments, not properties of precession. They can be argued for, revised, and applied inconsistently.

By those standards, some progress is real. Chattel slavery has been formally abolished and morally delegitimated across much of the world, although forced labor and other coercive systems persist. The

American political franchise expanded to people once excluded, although voting rights do not guarantee equal power. Clean-water and sanitation systems sharply reduced mortality in twentieth-century U.S. cities. These are institutional gains, not proof of uniform human ascent.[17]

Modernity has also enlarged the capacity for harm. Industrial warfare, administrative mass killing, ecological destruction, pervasive surveillance, and technologically amplified propaganda allow institutions to injure people at scales unavailable to most earlier states. A society can recognize more people as equals while developing more efficient ways to control them. It can prohibit an atrocity in law while tolerating its functional equivalent elsewhere.

A moral audit must therefore ask whose suffering enters the circle of concern, whether declarations become material protection, how much harm the society can cause, and whether its gains can survive panic, capture, war, and concentrated power.

bell hooks clarifies what the Aquarian prophecy evades. Love is not a feeling descending when consciousness reaches the correct frequency. It is a practice involving care, knowledge, responsibility, respect, trust, and commitment. A love ethic must oppose domination because care without justice easily becomes sentimentality.[18]

The song imagines love steering the stars. A love ethic asks who will perform the material, political, and emotional work of steering institutions.

That question complicates the counterculture's liberatory claims. Sexual freedom could expand autonomy, make queer life more legible, and challenge punitive conventions. Yet it did not distribute contraception, pregnancy, childcare, domestic work, vulnerability, or emotional responsibility equally. Declaring desire free did not determine who would bear its consequences.

Periodization distributes moral visibility in a similar way. European divisions of world history into ancient, medieval, and modern often treated European change as the clock for the species. Societies following other sequences could be assigned to the past while living in the same chronological present. Johannes Fabian called this a denial of coevalness.[19]

The Age of Aquarius can reproduce that ranking. If Aquarius means networks, secular knowledge, sexual autonomy, egalitarianism, and individual liberation, communities organized around other priorities may appear as remnants of Pisces rather than contemporaries with conflicts and reasons of their own.

Nor was the American counterculture a single emancipated subject. *Hair*'s integrated cast challenged segregation, but its racially charged language and its romantic appropriation of Native American "tribe" imagery complicate its emancipatory claim.[3] Its rejection of middle-class security could overlook people for whom security was an unachieved protection. DEVO's universal contempt for "humanity" could

flatten differences among people who design coercive systems, people who benefit from them, and people forced to survive them.

Optimism becomes dangerous when it erases costs. Cynicism becomes dangerous when it dissolves responsibility. Moral progress is neither the arrival of an age nor the verdict of a species. It is the unstable result of practices maintained by people who can fail, be defeated, or transfer the costs of their freedom to others.

The Direction Is in the Edit

Historical direction is constructed, but construction does not make every account equally good. A responsible history must answer to evidence, declare its scale, distinguish representative events from spectacular exceptions, confront counterevidence, and account for people whose experience complicates its governing story.

The deaths at Kent State are not an edit. Joining them to other events under the heading “the death of the sixties” is an edit. The Fifth Dimension’s tape splice is literal editing. Aquarius frames the resulting ascent as the dawning of an age. Radio, records, charts, and television amplify the frame. Keeping those operations distinct protects the argument from two errors: facts do not arrange themselves, but neither can stories arrange facts without constraint.

Humanity has neither steadily ascended nor simply devolved. People have created institutions that reduce suffering, and other people have dismantled them. Freedoms have widened while new mechanisms of domination have developed. There is no staircase on which the whole species stands.

Aquarius and DEVO endure because each recognizes half of this condition.

Aquarius recognizes that people need an image of a future not wholly determined by present violence. Durable cooperation is difficult for people who believe every effort merely disguises domination.

DEVO recognizes that technical novelty and moral improvement are independent variables. A society can place machinery on the Moon and still shoot students. It can connect billions of people while concentrating surveillance and power. It can speak continuously of innovation while reproducing ancient hierarchies.

So: Aquarius or DEVO? Neither is an adequate calendar. The choice is not between optimism and pessimism. It is between accounts of history that conceal their construction and accounts that expose it, test themselves against counterevidence, and remain answerable to the people they place inside an age.

That standard applies to the “Age of AI.” The name can obscure the labor, minerals, energy systems, data centers, corporate decisions, public subsidies, legal arrangements, and human judgments producing the technology. It can classify resistance as backwardness and adoption as destiny. Or it can direct attention toward the institutions being built, the power governing them, and the people required to live under them.

An age becomes historically powerful when an account of time enters institutions, media, and ordinary expectations strongly enough to organize conduct.

The necessary questions are not only *What age is this?* or *When does the next one begin?* They are: Who made the clock? Who selected its evidence? Who amplified its story? Who must live by its direction? And beneath them all: Whose suffering has become harder to ignore, and whose has been edited out?

The stars cannot tell us whether we are becoming more compassionate. That answer appears in what people build, protect, refuse, and repair. The responsibility remains ours.

Sources and Notes

Body-note numbers point to the sources below. Explanatory qualifications are included where the evidence requires them.

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2. The approximately 2.2-year Mars-Jupiter interval follows from the planets’ mean orbital periods and is their synodic period; see Jean Meeus, *Astronomical Algorithms*, 2nd ed. (Richmond, VA: Willmann-Bell, 1998). For a given location, Earth’s rotation carries the Moon through the astrological houses, while the Moon’s roughly 27.3-day orbit changes its celestial position from day to day. Different house systems divide the chart differently.

3. Gerome Ragni and James Rado, *Hair: The American Tribal Love-Rock Musical*, music by Galt MacDermot (New York: Pocket Books, 1969); Scott Miller, *Let the Sun Shine In: The Genius of Hair* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003); Lorrie Davis with Rachel Gallagher, *Letting Down My Hair: Two Years with the Love Rock Tribe—From Dawning to Downing of Aquarius* (New York: A. Fields Books, 1973); Colette Dowling, “Hair—Trusting the Kids and the Stars,” *Playbill*, May 1971. Masterworks Broadway’s synopsis of the original cast recording describes Claude appearing in Army clothes, unheard by the tribe, and lying down as if dying during the finale; scripts and stagings have varied. On the work’s racially charged language and cultural stereotypes, see University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre & Dance, “Performing *Hair* in the 21st Century: Honoring the Work and Acknowledging Change,” April 11, 2022. On its appropriation of Native American imagery, see Miriam Hahn, *Playing Hippies and Indians: Acts of Cultural Colonization in the Theatre of the American Counterculture* (Ph.D. diss., Bowling Green State University, 2014).

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5. Dan Daley, “Classic Tracks: The 5th Dimension’s ‘Aquarius/Let the Sunshine In,’” *Mix*, February 1, 2004; Richard Buskin, “Classic Tracks: The Fifth Dimension ‘Aquarius/Let the Sunshine In,’” *Sound on Sound*, February 2006. These production histories identify Bones Howe, Bob Alcivar, Bill Holman, the principal session musicians, the Hollywood backing-track session, the Las Vegas vocal session, and the tape edit that joined the songs.

6. Ahmir “Questlove” Thompson, dir., *Summer of Soul (…Or, When the Revolution Could Not Be Televised)* (Searchlight Pictures, 2021); Marilyn McCoo and Billy Davis Jr., interview by Robin Young, *Here & Now*, WBUR, June 29, 2021. McCoo’s statements about racially divided radio programming are recollections, not a comprehensive station-by-station survey.

7. *Billboard*, Hot 100 records for the 5th Dimension and “Aquarius/Let the Sunshine In”; Recording Academy, “12th Annual Grammy Awards” and artist records. The recording spent six weeks at number one and won Record of the Year and Best Contemporary Vocal Performance by a Group. On the period’s use of ranked sales and airplay reports, see Gary Trust, “How the Charts Have Evolved Across Billboard’s History,” *Billboard*, November 14, 2019.

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Archives, “May 4 Chronology”; Kent State University, “The May 4 Shootings at Kent State University: The Search for Historical Accuracy”; Kent State University, “50 States of Protest: America Responds to May 4, 1970.” The university account reports twenty-eight Guardsmen firing sixty-one to sixty-seven shots in thirteen seconds, killing four students and wounding nine. Kent State’s archival materials distinguish Sandra Scheuer, who was walking through the area, from William Schroeder, who was observing from the parking lot; the university’s student-strike history documents the nationwide response and hundreds of campus closures.

10. Kent State University, “Remembering May 4—An Interview with Devo’s Jerry Casale,” April 30, 2020; Gerald V. Casale, “50 Years of DEVOlution: Our First Show,” April 18, 2023. Casale dates the first “Sextet Devo” performance to the Kent State Creative Arts Festival on April 18, 1973. Accounts of DEVO’s formation differ, especially over the contributions of Casale, Bob Lewis, Mark Mothersbaugh, and other collaborators.

11. DEVO, “About” and “Are We Not Men? We Are Devo!,” Club Devo; Richard Buskin, “Classic Tracks: DEVO ‘Whip It,’” *Sound on Sound*, July 2008; Rhino, “August 1980: Devo Release ‘Whip It,’” August 13, 2021; Recording Academy, “Living Legends: Devo Subverted the Herd Mentality,” April 20, 2022. Club Devo identifies Bowie’s endorsement, Eno’s production, the Warner Bros./Virgin release structure, and DEVO’s early-MTV visual influence. The production and label histories document regional radio airplay’s role in the hit and Warner’s financing of its promotional video. These facts concern transmission and reframing, not cultural scale equal to Aquarian millenarianism.

12. Jackson State University, Margaret Walker Center, “The Gibbs-Green Tragedy”; Nancy K. Bristow, *Steeped in the Blood of Racism: Black Power, Law and Order, and the 1970 Shootings at Jackson State College* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020); South Carolina State University, “Orangeburg Massacre Anniversary Commemoration.” Bristow cautions against treating Jackson State as merely another campus-shooting episode because doing so obscures its specific history of racialized state violence.

13. Adam Daniel Smith, “The Chinese Sexagenary Cycle and the Ritual Foundations of the Calendar,” in John M. Steele, ed., *Calendars and Years II: Astronomy and Time in the Ancient and Medieval World* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2011), 1–37. A 2010 repository version uses “Ritual Origins” in its title; Oxbow’s contents page gives the published title as “Ritual Foundations.”

14. Swami Sri Yukteswar Giri, *The Holy Science*, 8th ed. (Los Angeles: Self-Realization Fellowship, 1990), originally composed in 1894. Yukteswar’s 24,000-year chronology is a modern reinterpretation and should not be presented as the sole or universally accepted Hindu account of yuga time.

15. Abu Maʿshar, *On Historical Astrology: The Book of Religions and Dynasties*, ed. and trans. Keiji Yamamoto and Charles Burnett, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2000); Laura Ackerman Smoller, *History, Prophecy, and the Stars: The Christian Astrology of Pierre d’Ailly, 1350–1420* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); Hesiod, *Works and Days*, lines 109–201, for the succession of gold, silver, bronze, heroic, and iron races.

16. On historical emplotment, temporal horizons, and shared imaginaries, see Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), and *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987); Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004); Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004). These works do not imply that narrative construction releases history from evidentiary constraint.

17. For abolition and surviving coercive labor, see Seymour Drescher, *Abolition: A History of Slavery and Antislavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), and International Labour Organization, Walk Free, and International Organization for Migration, *Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage* (Geneva: ILO, 2022). On the contested expansion of the American franchise, see Alexander Keyssar, *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States*, rev. ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2009). On clean water, sanitation, and urban mortality in the United States, see David Cutler and Grant Miller, “The Role of Public Health Improvements in Health Advances: The Twentieth-Century United States,” *Demography* 42, no. 1 (February 2005): 1–22, doi:10.1353/dem.2005.0002. For an agency-centered account of development, see Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (New York: Knopf, 1999). These examples establish specific institutional gains, not uniform human improvement.

18. bell hooks, *All About Love: New Visions* (New York: William Morrow, 2000); hooks, *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations* (New York: Routledge, 1994). Hooks describes love as a practice involving care, commitment, trust, responsibility, respect, and knowledge, and sets a love ethic against domination.

19. Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983); Kathleen Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty: How Ideas of Feudalism and Secularization Govern the Politics of Time* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

Appendix: Transmission

(Non-Analytical Layer)

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This work was developed with AI-assisted analysis tools. All arguments, structures, and final judgments are the author’s.

Hey Josiane,

Sum Bunny Loves You!!!